



Diversity Task Group

Date: Monday, September 9, 2019
Time: 6:45-9:00pm
Location: Lyons Conference Room, Town Hall, 2nd Floor

Minutes

Attendance: Michaiah Healy, Katell Guellec, Rajeev Soneja, Brooks Harrelson, Mary Harrison, Regina Gaines, Paula Jordan, Purvi Patwari, Betty Stone, Mary Fusoni, Lynette Martyn, Edith Wun, Robin Bergman, Elizabeth Dray, Mona Mandel, Barbara Thornton, Michael Brown

- 1) Welcome and Getting to Know You: Introduce yourself and what is the oldest thing in your refrigerator.
- 2) Breaking off into smaller groups to talk about what you care about in our community and what this might mean for the mission of DTG.
 - a) Incremental steps that lead to larger change, larger values of this group that make people feel safe to come here, letting people's voices be heard, creating safe spaces so you can have community and action, honoring viewpoints and holding agreements, Native American-style listening circles where you pass an object that gives each person a voice -- as well as asking permission to comment on others' thoughts.
 - b) How diversity and inclusion relates to our individual life experiences -- education, food and farming, sustainable development, parenting -- and how involvement in the DTG might take things to the next level, beyond what the town does in this area. How do you take a community along? Example of sessions with Liza T. where people seemed able to be open with each other. Need more opportunities for these safe conversations. Regina gave the update on the consultant who has been hired to work with elementary school DIGs to create conversations that help parents talk at home. Much harder to take this issue on at Ottoson. Rajeev updated the DIG effort at Gibbs and, now, with Ottoson. Also, Purvi discussed the work of the BSU at the high school and doing mentoring at other schools in town.
 - c) What is holding back the conversations around racism? Silence with the petition, polarization, etc. Are white people afraid to have these discussions?
 - d) Worry over increase in hate crimes in schools and otherwise, DTG as a place for people in town who feel marginalized, motivations for coming to this group--Ferguson, Colonial Day. DTG should be a voice for change in the town so that it's not always the same old people talking. One positive sign is that our meetings often have new faces, so people have heard about it.
- 3) Recognizing and approving two new co-chairs for DTG 2019-2020: the two new co-chairs were approved -- Rajeev Soneja and Katell Guellec.
- 4) Reviewing DTG's mission, vision, and approving goals for 2019: statements on the website that describe our goals.

DTG's Goals for 2019-2020 (pending approval)

- Creation of a government and civic sector partnership: monthly breakfast/town diversity advisory council (invite cultural niches, inter-faith communities, recovery groups, other civic groups) to collaborate, advise, report, guide decisions affecting community values of equity and inclusion and to be called on in times of crisis.
 - Q: Would this intersect with the government task group in Envision Arlington? A: This would be a different effort, more to bring together and coordinate the efforts of so many disparate groups.
 - Barbara: www.equitable-arlington.org. This group would like to work with DTG on racist zoning practices, historical and current. Exclusionary zoning. Would like to bring a speaker (Sheila Geohring) to town on that topic.
 - Champion the full funding of at least 2 community engagement specialists for organizing and community outreach and to raise up new community leaders for committees, commissions, jobs.
 - Support the creation of town warrants for a civilian review board, fair housing commission...
 - Engage the community and share community experiences of overt, covert, and unconscious racism in Arlington through monthly book discussions, hosting town department leaders at DTG, inviting trainers and performances with community and neighboring community partners.
 - Support our schools Diversity Inclusion Groups, the Superintendents Diversity Advisory Committee, and METCO program.
- 5) True Story Theater's October 12th Performance at the ACA -Saturday October 12, 2019, 7:30pm *"The experience of immigrants in our community: An interactive story-sharing performance"* To co-sponsor it would mean \$300 from our \$1,200 budget. Two ideas they suggested were RJ and immigrant experience. History: When they got their first grant, the DTG was their sponsoring organization; most of those early performances were about difference; also some of those got turned into articles for the *Advocate*. Discussion around topic: perhaps RJ could be the topic if we could somehow set aside the Pedrini issue, or we could see the connection between the immigrant story and the Pedrini issue; could we wait and make the topic choice after Arlington Reads so the topics are the same; it might make sense not to focus on RJ because it's so tied up with Pedrini issue, so could they focus on vulnerable town citizens/immigrants. The room in Arl Ctr for the Arts holds 25 people.
 - 6) Town Day Participation- September 14th -Staffing our Town Day Display
 - 7) Approval of August Minutes: approved
 - 8) Pedrini Petition - to sign or not to sign as the DTG: Michaiah gave a summary and background on the topic. There was discussion about what it means for DTG to sign the petition and whether it fits with our broader mission, as well as whether this is a grey area for our status as a task group. The question was raised whether the petition creators have considered the pros and cons of how DTG signing on might create any barriers for others to join our group, and we are putting out to the community that this is our line in the sand, and would this interfere with the safe space. What entry points are we creating by signing this as a group? What does it mean for a group to sign a petition vs individuals? A vote was not taken, as time was running out.
 - 9) Michael Brown raised a topic for discussion about how to involve more POC in the growing marijuana business. A new state law says that people who have been arrested most for MJ should benefit first by this change in legalization. It is happening in Somerville.